

**DRAFT Minutes of March 13, 2014**

Location: DDS Central Office, Conference Room A

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin; Jim Heffernan; Sheila Mulvey; Patrick Vingo; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary; David Hadden; Diana Mennone; Lisa Weisinger-Roland; Commissioner Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D., Ex-officio

Absent: Patti Silva, Chair; Jack Frost, Vice Chair; Dr. John Pelegano

Staff: Joseph Drexler, Deputy Commissioner; Edward Mambruno, DDS Ombudsperson; Christine Pollio Cooney, Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs; Dianne Gill, Administrative Assistant

Chairperson Jamie Lazaroff opened meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Public Comment

No members of the public attended

Approval of February Minutes

February minutes were reviewed. No changes were made. A motion was made to accept the minutes as written. The council voted to accept the February minutes.

The newest council member, Lisa Weisinger-Roland, was introduced and all members introduced themselves including Diana Mennone who was new to the council last month.

Ombudsman report - Ed Mambruno

Mr. Mambruno discussed his most recent report. He summarized the issues that he was recently contacted about. He also talked about testifying for a bill that would make it easier to get customized wheelchair equipment covered by Title 19.

Legislative Update - Christine Pollio Cooney

Ms. Cooney referred to the link on the DDS website where agency testimony on legislation can be found. She explained where DDS agency bills were currently in the legislative process. Some have been voted out of the Public Health Committee favorable, some are being revised and one is in the Judiciary Committee. A question was asked regarding the level of activity this session compared to others. Ms. Cooney answered that it was about the same as last year although this is a short session so there is less time to do everything and there seem to be more inquiries and interest related to the family hearing day and the waiting list.

Christine asked for the council's input on an amendment to an agency bill that would expand council membership by one more person. Representative Susan Johnson recommended the addition of another member so that there would be an odd number of members and thus less chance for any tie votes. The council recommended that DDS pursue leaving the appointment open with no specific qualifier in statute to provide greater flexibility with the appointment. Christine shared two bills that are having public hearings in the Public Health Committee next week, one regarding autism services and one to address the waiting list. Members discussed these bills and voted to draft testimony to the Public Health Committee regarding House Bill 5534 regarding the Waiting List.

Christine also mentioned the proposed changes to regulations by the Department of Social Services regarding wheelchairs and said she would keep the council updated on DDS's conversation with DSS.

Commissioner's update

Commissioner Macy talked about House Bill 5534 and his concern about making services an entitlement. This has been done in only one other state and the effect has been that everyone who is eligible receives only a small amount of resources. The Commissioner announced good news regarding the Academy pilot. It is starting next month (April) and is designed to train 35 DDS employees to work as part of Individual and Family Support team, creating a steady stream of employees to provide families with direct support. This will allow for more skilled and trained employees to go into family homes offer a greater array of support.

Commissioner Macy reported that the opportunities for provider mentorship are really taking off. Eight private provider agencies are participating in the mentoring program and there has been really great feedback.

Commissioner Macy shared that private providers are concerned about the scope and format for DSS Medicaid audits. DDS is working with DSS staff on the audit process. Peter Mason, Director of the DDS Operations Center, will be participating in all the audit exit meetings with providers. So far the audit process seems very straight forward and does not appear to have any punitive qualities.

Commissioner Macy invited council members to a Developmental Disability Awareness month event on March 31, 2014 at Central Office.

Commissioner Macy shared two documents with members related to the Waiting List numbers and a breakdown of the Community Residential Account expenditures. Discussion took place among members who expressed how helpful these documents were.

Commissioner Macy talked about a request to move some funding from the personal services account to be used for support family support grants.

Commissioner talked about how the agency budget affects the wait list. He referenced the data that is available on the DDS website in the quarterly Management Information Report (MIR).

Deputy Commissioner Drexler commented on the data related to the age of caregivers. He explained how the priority determination is made, based on the severity of need and not necessarily on the age of the caregiver.

David Hadden made a motion to have the chair and vice chair draft a letter to the Public Health and Appropriations committees supporting funding for families in need on the Waiting List. Sheila Mulvey seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Old Business – Council members discussed upcoming meeting topics and speakers. They would still like Trades to be invited to discuss legislative advocacy, at the April meeting if they are available. They would also like to schedule Robin Wood to come and update the council on Community of Practice activities and also need to invite the Regional Advisory Councils to an upcoming meeting this year.

New Business - Jamie Lazaroff shared that he has recently been appointed by Rep. Mae Flexer to be a member of the M.O.R.E. Commission Special Education working group. Ms. Cooney commented that DDS was recently asked to present information to the working group on the issue of transition services (from the education system into adult services).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.